United Nations A/70/164

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 July 2015
English
Original: Arabic, English, Russian, Spanish

Seventieth session
Item 98 (g) of the provisional agenda*
General and complete disarmament

Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/70/150.

15-12312 (E) 070815

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/47, on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, the General Assembly decided to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to the ! Assembly at its seventieth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 18 February 2015, the Secretariat sent a note verbale to Member States requesting their views on the subject. To date, nine replies have been received from Member States and are reproduced in section II below. Subsequent replies will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Member States

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[12 May 2015]

Argentina fully agrees with the proposal contained in paragraph 2 of the resolution, and understands the need for principles that serve as a framework for regional agreements, which will enhance mutual trust between countries in the region by helping to establish tighter controls over conventional arms.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that a mechanism for transparency in the military inventories of the countries of South America has been established through the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and that the information to be collected is already provided for in the forms used for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which Argentina has completed annually since the Register came into effect in 1991.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[27 March 2015]

Conventional arms control efforts at the subregional, regional and global levels must strictly conform to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including equal rights, the self-determination of peoples, the right to self-defence, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Adequate arms control leads to security and the strengthening of peace. As part of the initiatives of the Latin American and Caribbean region to strengthen regional peace and security, the region was proclaimed a zone of peace at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana. In the proclamation, all Latin American and Caribbean States agreed to banish war and the threat and use of force in the region and to endeavour to resolve differences between States by peaceful means and in line with international law.

The conventional arms that Cuba possesses are defensive in nature and serve to ensure national security and defence. These arms are under the strict control of the appropriate State authorities. Moreover, Cuba has never possessed, does not possess and has no intention of ever possessing weapons of mass destruction of any kind.

In Cuba, the vast majority of conventional arms are the property of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. This Ministry has internal rules and mechanisms necessary for the rigorous and periodic control of stocks of these weapons and follows strict procedures to ensure the security of its arsenals.

In many regions, an obstacle to the control of conventional arms is the relative ease with which such arms can be acquired by non-State actors. It is a matter of concern that in many countries the sale of such arms is not strictly regulated and export and import permits are not rigorously controlled. No sales of any kind of arms are permitted in Cuba, either from or between individuals or between individuals and juridical persons.

Initiatives that promote international cooperation and assistance to control arms must be encouraged. Such activities must take into account national needs and requests and respect the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, efforts to promote regional and subregional agreements on conventional arms control must take into consideration the specific needs of the parties concerned and the voluntary nature of their involvement.

Czech Republic

[Original: English]
[23 April 2015]

The Czech Republic in 2014 implemented all commitments stemming from international agreements on arms control, disarmament and confidence and security-building measures in Europe.

The Czech Republic, in accordance with to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe:

- Organized and conducted one multinational inspection abroad (with participation of four inspectors from four countries).
- Organized two multinational training inspections (with participation of nineteen inspectors from eight countries).
- Took part in two allied inspection teams abroad.

In accordance with the Vienna Document 2011, the Czech Republic:

- Organized one evaluation visit and two inspections of specified areas.
- Took part in eight visits to air bases, ten visits to other military facilities and in four demonstrations of new types of weapons.
- Took part in six inspections as a part of foreign teams.
- Took part in three additional inspections above quota.

The Czech Republic sent two assistants to two inspections conducted in accordance with article IV of the Daytona Peace Agreement.

In accordance with the Treaty on Open Skies, the Czech Republic:

- Received one observation flight and conducted two joint observation flights.
- Took part in one another observation flight as a part of a foreign team.

El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]
[13 May 2015]

Pursuant to the obligations of El Salvador to the United Nations and to the Organization of American States concerning measures that its Armed Forces can take in accordance with resolution 69/47 entitled, "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", I hereby inform you that, in the context of the Conference of the Armed Forces of Central America and the Caribbean, an agreement has been ratified with a view to contributing to peace and security in the region. Under this agreement, the armed forces members of the Conference undertake to acquire only the arms necessary to face shared threats that are emerging in the region and that hinder national development. The Ministry of Defence also controls and registers firearms pursuant to the Act on the regulation and control of arms, ammunition, explosives and similar items.

Germany

[Original: English]
[1 June 2015]

Germany is dedicated to confidence-building and conventional arms control measures at the regional level. Germany attaches great importance and devotes considerable commitment to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as its relevant regional security organization. Detailed information about Germany's commitment regarding regional security and confidence-building can be found in Germany's 2014 contribution to the database on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms dated 30 April 2015 (see General Assembly resolution 69/64), as well as Germany's report entitled "Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context", dated 29 May 2015 (see General Assembly resolution 69/46).

With regard to the request formulated in operative paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 69/47, currently Germany does not consider the Conference on Disarmament to be the appropriate forum for the formulation of principles regarding regional agreements on conventional arms control. We note that non-universal membership of the Conference on Disarmament may prevent specific regional contexts from being adequately taken into account when formulating such principles.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[1 April 2015]

The Ministry of National Defence wishes to make the following points:

- In regard to this matter, the authoritative resolutions adopted by the United Nations should be duly complied with, and the Charter should be respected;
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the resolution of international disputes, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- States are equal in terms of sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is important to prevent an arms race and build confidence;
- All concerned regional States should remain compliant with a view to precluding any repetition of the double standards applied in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. States should be held accountable in the event of non-compliance;
- The manufacture and transfer of arms should be controlled, and the smuggling of and illicit trafficking in arms should be suppressed in order to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of terrorists;
- Legislation should be enacted at the regional and international levels in order to limit the proliferation of such weapons, while allowing for the possibility of their individual or collective use to resist occupation or defend territory;
- Multilateralism should be strengthened as a means of furthering negotiation on arms regulation and disarmament.

Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[21 April 2015]

Issues of conventional arms control in Europe remain relevant, especially considering the deterioration in the European security situation over the past year. However, General Assembly resolution 69/47, which contains language agreed upon in different geopolitical circumstances and repeated year after year, does not reflect current realities. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe lost its "relevance and value" and ceased to be a "cornerstone of European security" long ago, as it is hopelessly out of date. The Russian Federation suspended its participation in 2007.

The Russian Federation is prepared to discuss with our partners methods for developing a new regime for conventional arms control in Europe that takes into consideration current realities and addresses the concerns of Russia and those of other European States.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[12 May 2015]

The ultimate goal of any system of arms control or confidence- and security-building measures is to prevent conflict by reducing the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation of the military activities of other countries; taking steps to impede covert military preparations; reducing the risk of surprise attacks; and reducing the risk of the outbreak of war by accident.

The establishment of confidence-building measures, especially among affected neighbouring States, the strengthening of border controls and the training of specialized staff, among other arrangements, could create a propitious environment for the elaboration of supranational (including regional and subregional) arms control agreements.

In addition, regional and subregional conventional arms control agreements should take into account the importance of:

- Increasing transparency measures within the regional and subregional forums themselves and disseminating the objectives of such forums.
- Compiling an arms inventory in the countries where such inventories do not yet exist.
- Measures to promote universal adherence to the various international instruments.
- Enforcing strict requirements for export and import permits.
- Strengthening mechanisms for monitoring weapons manufacturers.

In line with the above, Spain has defined its "thematic action lines" for its term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The most important of these action lines, as far as this report is concerned, are the following:

- Enhance the preventive role of the Council, in order to improve its responsiveness to emerging crises and potential threats to peace and security by addressing risk factors (such as the proliferation of conventional arms) and the root causes of conflict.
- Promote the role of regional and subregional organizations in the field of peace and security.
- Address disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes in fragile countries and post-conflict situations.
- In relation to the 1540 Committee, promote among States, industry and civil society, both the full and effective implementation of the resolution, with clear objectives in each of these three areas of action, and the reduction of the number of States that have yet to report on its implementation.

Ukraine

[Original: English]
[26 May 2015]

Ukraine fully shares the vision and recognizes the importance of the role of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and its constituent elements laid out in General Assembly resolution 69/47, and, accordingly, welcomes all respective measures in the field of conventional arms control past, present and future.

To Ukraine, which has become the victim of Russia's aggression, the answer to the question as to whether conventional arms control deserves continuous universal attention is quite obvious. Surely it does, and moreover, even more so in the light of the still not eradicated possibility of aggression.

Ukraine remains consistently committed to the objectives of strengthening security for all, including through effective conventional arms control. This commitment has been reinforced by Russia's uncivilized behaviour, which has, inter alia, maliciously caused conventional arms control in Europe to enter into a state of impasse. Thus, the result is an erosion of trust and confidence in the military field, a challenge to the very essence of the contemporary European security architecture, as well as to verifiable security and confidence-building embodied in conventional arms control and related confidence- and security-building measures.

Ukraine is a long-term responsible participant of such pan-European and complimentary bilateral confidence-building mechanisms relevant to conventional arms control as the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Treaty on Open Skies, and the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, as well as separate bilateral agreements on confidence- and security-building measures with neighbouring Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Belarus and Romania. As such, despite the tense situation in the country and the derivative increase of the burden on Ukraine's Armed Forces caused by Russia's aggression, Ukraine continues to comply with its obligations assumed under the above-referenced international instruments in the field of conventional arms control.

However, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which started with the annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and continues with the destabilization of the situation in the east of Ukraine, significantly complicated Ukraine's ability to ensure full and timely implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, once praised as a cornerstone of European security. Moreover, it has made it impossible to fulfil some of them for reasons of national security.

At the same time, the continuing possibility of aggression, while raising concerns over conventional arms control effectiveness, also underscores its potential value when countries comply with their commitments and obligations and implement them fully and in good faith. In particular, Ukraine's case is yet another reminder of the urgent need to improve conventional arms control in order to strengthen its capability, inter alia, via tightening intrusiveness and obligatory level to better address the existing security challenges in the areas of application.

Ukraine's case also compels a periodic assessment of the relevance, as well as the strengths and weaknesses, of conventional arms control tools used by participating States, without waiting for acts of aggression.

Sharing dissatisfaction with the ongoing impasse in conventional arms control in Europe, which occurred through the fault of the leadership of the Russian Federation, as well as with the slowdown in improvement in the confidence- and security-building measures of the Vienna Document 2011 during its chairmanship of OSCE in 2013, Ukraine initiated a discussion on the role that conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures can play in the creation of a modern and future security architecture in Europe.

The salient idea and the main goal of the Ukrainian initiative was and is to launch a future-oriented strategic discussion on conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures.

While the discussions have not yet provided a firm indication as to the concrete next steps, the Ukrainian initiative proved to be a timely undertaking. Future work towards this goal should be viewed in the context of related Russian aggressive actions.

Ukraine considers that confidence-building in the field of conventional arms:

- Offers, for a limited cost, a set of tools combining transparency through declaration, on-site verification and arms limitation, instead of devoting resources to gathering intelligence about the conventional capabilities of neighbouring countries.
- Is designated not only to control numbers of armaments and military equipment but also to reduce the risk of conflict by increasing trust among States us and contributing to greater openness, predictability and transparency in the field of defence planning and military activities.
- Must include such classic time-tested tools as complete, accurate and timely exchange of relevant information and its on-the-spot verification, with the highest possible level of specification and sufficient intrusiveness, respectively, dependent on the level of trust among their participants in each time span, bearing in mind that what the participating States do not notify within the framework of information exchange cannot be verified.
- Should incorporate from the outset, or gradually thereafter, all measures worked out for the instruments which as of today are exemplary in the areas of conventional arms control and confidence-building, namely, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 and additional measures for the collective taming of aggression.
- Should first deal with the traditional categories of conventional armaments, bearing in mind the necessity to put new categories under control when the time comes.
- Should have as many participants as possible and accordingly cover as large an area as possible.
- Preferably be legally binding to be more obligatory. On the other hand, the overall experience with the OSCE Vienna Document 2011 has shown that a politically binding agreement can work.

- Should be periodically evaluated by parties for viability, effectiveness and the possibility of further enhancement by way of modernization.

The above-stated assumption is based on the following premises:

- The challenge for the international community is not just to identify the major threats and risks, but to define and adjust the role that appropriate arms control instruments can play in meeting them.
- The security of each participating State is inseparably linked to that of all others. Each participating State has an equal right to security.
- Participants should maintain only those military capabilities that are commensurate with their legitimate individual or collective security needs.
- There should be no spheres of influence and no such thing as a "veto" vote when it comes to aggression.
- Limitations and, where necessary reductions of forces, are an important element in the continuing search for security and stability at lower levels of forces. Other constraining provisions on armed forces and security-building measures must continue to be significant elements in the quest for stability.
- At all times it will be important to ensure complementarity between regionwide and subregional approaches. Regional arms control efforts should be based, inter alia, on specific military security issues.
- Specific issues, such as modernization of the existing framework versus development of new mechanisms, identifying potential new elements in a new regime and updating existing instruments, are essential and must be dealt with when the time is right and within the appropriate format.
- Constant developments in military matters necessitate a fundamental modernization of conventional arms control.
- The strong commitment of the participating States to full implementation and further development of arms control agreements is essential for enhancing military and political stability within the respective areas; the positive trends of cooperation, transparency and predictability need to be gradually strengthened.

The above-referenced approaches, assumptions and principles may enable interested parties to make progress in moving them closer to peace and security throughout the area of application of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.